



“ Su Balasubramanian, crash survivor:

I moved to Washington, DC in 2010. I have been using my bicycle for my regular commute and to carry out most daily activities, ever since. I live in SE and am a resident of ANC 6B06.

Every time I've gotten on my bicycle, I've done so wearing my helmet and adhering to every road rule. Despite this, I have experienced and witnessed so many egregious hazards of being a cyclist in DC, most of which could have easily been prevented with a protected bicycle lane.



In the summer of 2018, I was riding my bicycle south on 11th St NW. As I reached the intersection with Florida Ave NW, a large van was parked illegally in the bike lane where it merges into the road. Because I was not protected by a separated bicycle lane, the van fully blocked my path. By the time I saw the van, I wasn't able to get around it, and I crashed.

That crash left me with a concussion, three brain bleeds, a broken jaw, which had to be wired shut for six weeks, a broken collarbone and three broken ribs. I was out of work for six weeks. All of this could have been easily avoided if, as a cyclist, I had been afforded the same respect and value as drivers and had a safe lane on which to ride.

And then, in the fall of 2020, as I was riding eastbound in the bicycle lane on T St NW, a motorist sped by me and suddenly pulled directly in front of me and came to a dead stop in the bike lane. In the seconds I had to respond I squeezed my brakes to avoid collision and flew over my handlebars and came inches within slamming into the car that was parked in front of me. This person driving had just decided to stop in the bicycle lane to look for parking. When the officer responded to this crash, he told me that I needed to be more careful as a cyclist - that I should maintain sufficient stopping distance to vehicles in front. When I asked how exactly I was supposed to maintain stopping distance from a motorist who suddenly pulled in front of me, he had no answer. While, yet

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again, this incident could have been avoided with a protected bicycle lane. What was equally frustrating was this unequivocal lack of care for the safety and well-being of cyclists embodied by this police officer. It is representative of the toxic car-first culture in the District and across our region.

I ride on Pennsylvania Ave SE every day, where there are 4 car lanes in BOTH directions – one is used for parking, another for STOPPING and two for moving car traffic. Really? Do we need to waste an ENTIRE precious lane for cars to stop when there is NO dedicated bicycle lane or bus lane on this major thoroughfare?

Our culture and our infrastructure need to change now. I know that there are efforts being made, but they are not being made quickly enough or widely enough. We need a full network of protected bicycle lanes in the District and need to change the pernicious culture that puts the convenience of motorists before human lives. Our lives literally depend on it.



DC Families for Safe Streets confronts traffic violence and its epidemic of tragic injuries and deaths. We are comprised of victims of traffic violence and families whose loved ones have been killed or severely injured by aggressive or reckless driving and dangerous conditions on District streets. We represent the full breadth of the District's diversity and demand an end to traffic violence.

We bear witness to our pain and suffering to press for the elimination of fatalities and injuries on our streets. Through our stories and advocacy, we seek cultural and physical changes on our streets and the rapid implementation of Vision Zero.

We envision a city where people who walk, roll, bike, and drive can safely co-exist, and children and adults can travel freely without risk of harm – where no loss of life in traffic is acceptable.

We advocate for life-saving changes and provide support to those affected by deadly crashes in our communities. We seek changes toward safer streets that might have saved our loved ones, or prevented injuries, as a meaningful way to channel our grief and honor our family members. We work so that no other families suffer the loss or life altering injuries that have impacted our families.

dcfamiliesforsafestreeets.org